

STEARNS WHARF / GENERAL INFORMATION

The City of Santa Barbara / Waterfront Department is responsible for managing approximately 252 acres of tidelands and water area including the Harbor, the Harbor commercial area, Stearns Wharf, and eight parking lots along Cabrillo Boulevard between Leadbetter Beach and East Beach. The Waterfront Department is an Enterprise Fund of the City of Santa Barbara and does not receive any tax revenue. The Department operates from revenue generated from the resources it manages; primarily lease (rent) revenue, marina and slip fees, and parking fees. The Waterfront Department's operating revenue for Fiscal Year 2011 (July 1, 2010-June 30, 2011) is budgeted at \$11,750,000 and the operating expense budget is \$10,943,000.

Stearns Wharf was originally built in 1872. It is currently the location of 17 businesses composed of several well-established restaurants, Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's Ty Warner Sea Center, various gift and retail shops, a bait & tackle shop, boat rides and coastal cruises. A water taxi service which transports passengers between the Harbor and the Wharf has been in operation since 2003.

Stearns Wharf has 150 parking spaces with nearby overflow parking in the Palm Park lot (267 spaces) and the Garden Street lot (214 spaces). The first 90 minutes of visitor parking on Stearns Wharf are free with a merchant validation stamp; otherwise, parking on the Wharf is \$2.50 per hour or part of an hour. Business owners and employees are required to park off of the Wharf per California Coastal Commission permit requirements and to allow for maximum parking availability for Wharf patrons. Annual parking permits for off-Wharf overflow parking lots are available for \$95 per calendar year and are honored in all Waterfront lots except Stearns Wharf.

The Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce estimates that 2 million visitors per year visit Stearns Wharf, approximately the same amount as the Mission. Santa Barbara averages 19,000 visitors a day, 365 days/year. Of these, approximately 7,500 stay overnight. Waterfront Department records indicate that the businesses on Stearns Wharf generated in excess of \$14,490,000 in sales in 2009 and \$14,862,000 in 2010.

The Department actively participates in the Stearns Wharf Business Association and the Harbor Merchants' Association by attending monthly meetings, paying monthly dues, and participating in cooperative advertising programs and community events such as the July 4th Fireworks show and the December Holiday Boat Parade of Lights, which is judged from the Wharf. Membership in the Stearns Wharf Business Association is mandatory for all Wharf businesses and dues for the cruise boat operator have been \$31 per month for over 20 years.

The County of Santa Barbara levies a 'possessory interest tax' each year which is a type of property tax that is applied when a business leases property from a government entity such as the City of Santa Barbara / Waterfront Department. The tax may range from approximately \$1,100 to \$1,500 per year depending on the rent and length of term negotiated. The City Waterfront Department does not receive any of the possessory interest tax revenue.

A berth is being held available for rent for the successful applicant in Marina 4, B finger, which will accommodate a vessel of up to approximately 85 feet in length with 25 foot beam. County possessory interest tax for the berth is estimated at approximately \$1,300 per year.